

10/26/04 Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park Improvements

Community Meeting Summary #3

Meeting objective: To provide Seattle Parks staff with your comments and priorities for park improvements and to understand how you can help with fundraising for future park improvements.

Project Planner Cathy Tuttle described the scope, schedule and budget of this Pro Parks project.

MISSION STATEMENT Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park was conceived as an inspirational memorial to Dr. King. The park is dedicated to teaching each new generation the lessons of Dr. King's life, and providing a sanctuary to remember his legacy. It serves as a reminder of the force of Dr. King's spirit, and gives visitors an opportunity to be inspired by his words. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park will awaken awe when seen from a distance and inspiration when experienced from within.

FUNDRAISING, FRIENDS, AND SPECIAL EVENTS FOR MLK PARK

Seattle Parks Volunteer Coordinator Janine Van Sanden provided a list of possible donors and foundations that could be approached to improve this site and its programs. Van Sanden cautioned community to share the fundraising efforts and avoid burnout.

Allynn Ruth of the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) discussed fundraising options at DON:

- Race and Social Justice may become an annual grant opportunity for \$15,000
 - Large Project Awards provide up to \$100,000 in money, labor and materials
 - Small & Simple grants provide up to \$15,000 and are well programs and outreach campaigns
- DON staff can review other grant applications and give advice. Ruth advised the community to involve children who are effective in selling a project and are the focus of many grant applications. Ruth encouraged the community to return to the original MLK funders with a menu of options.

Southeast Parks Operations Manager Cheryl Fraser emphasized that raising funds for MLK Park improvements was a strong community building activity.

DESIGNS FOR MLK PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Kim Baldwin & Karen Galt, Parks Landscape Architects reviewed Phase I and Phase II plans for the park. The Phase I plan is within budget while the more ambitious Phase II plan reflects more Master Plan goals but has a cost estimate of between \$1.3 and \$2 million.

Phase I improvements include accessibility improvements – interior paths and stairs leading to the top view point of the park. Additional benches and picnic tables will provide seating focused on the fountain plaza area. Minor landscape improvements will replace diseased trees and shrubs. Primary parking will remain on the unfinished eastern edge of the park. Maintenance improvements including fountain and lighting repairs, directional signage, and donation plaque cleaning are other planned improvements.

Phase II improvements include creating a dramatic park entry, building a performance stage with paving, and completing sidewalks around the park's perimeter. Other elements can be added as funds are raised such as a granite memorial arbor, an educational space that can also be a picnic shelter, street pole banners, unique interactive art and educational elements throughout the park, repairs to the unstable slope on the park's southwest side, and a restroom facility.

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION AND PRIORITIES OF PLAN

How much lighting is included? Existing lighting in and around the memorial fountain will be repaired and upgraded. No additional lighting is envisioned at this time.

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Will parking be allowed on 28th? How is it being addressed? Parking will continue along 28th. Park signs will also direct visitors to the Amy Yee Tennis Center lot to the north. Curbs may be added to improve on-street parking.

Can Parks put a tree with a bench under it with a stone nearby with the words of Dr. King, a place to sit and contemplate? Yes!

How are the paths accessible? Where are ramps and gently sloping paths? See the design for more details but ADA access to MLK Park is a priority of the park designs. The park will soon have seating, parking and loop paths that are accessible.

Could granite pavers have donors names on them? Yes, this process could help to pave some areas of the park. Parks has a supply of South African granite pavers that were purchased during the apartheid era. Because of community protest this granite was never used to pave Westlake Park but using this material could be a “teaching moment” in keeping with the messages of Dr. King.

Could there be a restroom south of the fountain, or could it be in a different location? The Phase II plan includes a restroom. Its location was chosen for proximity to the event space and is highly visible for safety concerns.

FUNDRAISING DISCUSSION

Two designs were presented – a Phase I plan within budget and a more ambitious Phase II plan that reflected more Master Plan goals but had a cost estimate of between \$1.3 and \$2 million. The community was given the option of delaying the construction of park improvements until 2006 in order to mount a fundraising effort for the Phase II plan. Several advantages of delaying construction until 2006 in order to raise funds were discussed:

1. More Master Plan goals could be realized
2. Having a fixed deadline to complete fundraising forces funders to respond quickly
3. Building only Phase II limits the disruption of park construction to a single season

On the other hand, the community was unsure of its capacity to raise money quickly. The group decided to meet the following week to make the decision about whether to construct the Phase I plan in 2005 or delay until 2006 and try to implement the Phase II plan.

Opportunities for programs and fundraising ideas were discussed:

1. Yoland King to visit in January, Dr. King's birthday
2. Dr. King's Birthday march on January 17 could kick-off the fundraising campaign
3. Tony Orange, Larry Gossett, or other community activists could serve as fundraising chairs
4. The fundraising campaign needs a (non-Parks) project manager, grant writer(s), a committee, association with a 501c3 organization to channel funds.
5. A fundraising student, Ameri-corps volunteer could be the campaign “project manager”.

UPCOMING EVENTS

11/7/04 Presentation of MLK Park Improvement Plan to local churches

1/6/05 Design Commission discussion on MLK Park Improvements. City Hall 9-10 a.m.

1/13/05 Park Board Briefing on MLK Park Improvements. 100 Dexter Ave N 6-8 p.m.

The Friends of MLK Park continue to meet to discuss programming and park fundraising. Contact Lang Marsh for more details (206)328-5006 langmarsh@w-link.net.

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